

# A study of the relationship between social anxiety, social self-efficacy and body image in the girl students of the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon Branch

Morteza Tarkhan, Mina Esmailpour, Taher Tizdast

Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

Received for publication: 10 July 2013.

Accepted for publication: 28 September 2013.

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the social anxiety, social self-efficacy and body image in the girl students of the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon Branch. The statistical sample is 240 girl students selected by stratified random sampling among 630 girl students who were studying in B.A level of humanities college in the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon Branch in the academic year of 2012-2013. The tool used in this research consists of social anxiety scale (Conor *et al.*, 2000), self-efficacy scale for the social situations (Gaudiano and Herbert, 2003) and body image test (Fischer, 1970). The statistical analysis by Pearson correlation and multivariable regression showed that there was a negative and significant relationship between the social anxiety and body image of the girl students while there was a positive and significant relationship between the social self-efficacy and body image of the girl students.

**Keywords:** social anxiety, social self-efficacy, body image.

## Introduction

For human, no valuing order is more important than his judgment regarding himself and evaluation of the person from himself is the most definitive factor in the process of psychological evolution. One of the cases in which an individual deals with the judgment about himself/ herself is judgment regarding

his/ her own body. Body image means a mental image which an individual has from his/her body. Perceptual component for body image is that how we see our size, figure, weight, face, movement and actions, while the viewing/ out look parts are that how we feel regarding these features and how our feelings direct our behavior. The image which an individual has from self/ego appears in all of his/her valuing reactions implicitly (Zanjani *et al.*, 2010)

Terms of "Body image" has been defined for the first time by Shilder as an image of our soma and body which we have made in our mind and manner of it's appearance according our opinion. This definition includes both perception and outlook. Perceptual component for body image is that how we see our size, shape, weight, face, movement and actions, while the viewing parts are that how we feel regarding these features and how our feelings direct our behavior (Gleeson, 2006)

In order words, body image suggests the attitude of individual from herself along with the feelings and thoughts which can change her own behavior in various conditions. This mental body image can be affected by the factors, including physical growth, interactions of individual with social environment, accidents, injury and somatic ulcerations and creates the worry about the body image in the individual (Sugar, 2003). Each individual has two images from his/ her own body which one of them represents the status quo and the another one suggests the ideal status of body (Stevens, 2005). Researches show that in appropriate perception of the body image and dissatisfaction with it can be led to the

**Corresponding author:** Mina Esmailpour, Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. E-mail: [mina.esmailpour@gmail.com](mailto:mina.esmailpour@gmail.com).

physical and psychic problems. In this regard, a lot of researches have shown relationship of this dissatisfaction with anxiety and stress, cigarette smoking and alcohol usage, nutritional disorders and suicide (Kim 2009). Continuation of this dissatisfaction leads to depression (Aramats *et al.*, 2003) social anxiety (Freda and Gamze, 2004) and descending of the self-esteem (Mirza *et al.*, 2008). Social anxiety consists of constant and specified fear from one or a few social situation/s or a performance through which an individual feels that he is exposed to the unfamiliar/ unknown individuals or possible scrutiny on the behalf of others and will be humiliated or ashamed (Masoudnia, 2008). In the research of Menan and colleagues (2010) carried out in order to study the rate of social anxiety in the fat women, it was shown that almost one-fourth of the fat individuals are afflicted by the temperamental disorders, including the social anxiety which this social anxiety results from dissatisfaction from body image and fear of negative evaluation. Individuals afflicted by the social anxiety are specified through the biased negative internal representation from themselves and preferential inclination toward the attention focused on the mental representation or protecting external witnesses. Negative mental representation leads to over-estimation of possibility of consequence of other's negative evaluation and, therefore, individuals suffering from the social anxiety show the anxious symptoms and behaviors such as avoidance whom they support their own negative mental representation (Rapee *et al.*, 2007).

Many researched have shown relationship of the social anxiety with dissatisfaction with body image (Freda *et al.*, 2004, Von soest, 2009, Fredrick, 2007, Ivarsson *et al.*, 2005). The contemporary theories regarding the social anxiety have put emphasis on the role of the cognitive processes in continuation of social anxiety disorder (Hofman, 2007). Out of the cognitive processes, for example, considered in the domain of the social anxiety, the selective biases in the attention, care interpretation, memory, judgment and social self-efficacy can be mentioned (Abdi, 2007). Self-efficacy is the firm belief in merits which have been obtained on the basis of evaluation of various resources of information regarding our abilities (Muris, 2002). Beliefs in the self-efficacy determine how much an individual makes effort to do a job and how much he/ she shows perseverance while facing with obstacles and how much he/ she resists in the maladapted situations (Tahmasian *et al.*, 2005). In a

research, Gadiano and Herbert studied the self-efficacy in the social situations in the juveniles suffered from the generalized social anxiety. Results showed that the changes in the social self-efficacy are in harmony with the changes in the symptoms of the social anxiety after ending the treatment. In his research, Denis showed that low self-efficacy relates to the signs/ symptoms of anxiety and depression disorders and high psychosomatic signs (Dennis, 2003). Also, Moris surveyed relationship between self-efficacy and signs of the affective disorders in the great sample of the Netherland's normal teenagers, he expressed that the low level of self-efficacy has been accompanied by high level of anxiety attributes and signs of anxiety disorders, including the social anxiety disorder (Muris, 2002).

With regard to high percentage of the girl students in Iran and, also, the importance they put on the appearance and beauty, dissatisfaction with body image can affect on their preoccupation tangibly which leads to the school dropout, with drawl, lack of participation in the social situations, depression and etc. therefore, it is required that this category is to be studied more. Considering the high vulnerability of girls and undeniable effect of their health in the health of society and future generations, limitation of information resources in this regard in our country and effect of the mental-somatic image on the their psychological balance and health, the current research seeks for determination between social anxiety and social self-efficacy with/ and body image of the girl students.

## Methodology

The current research is a descriptive research being of correlation type. The statistical universe of this research has been consisted of the entire B.A. level girl/ female students of the humanities collage of the Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon Branch who are studying in this university in the academic year of 2012-2013. These students are 630 individuals in number out of which 240 individuals were selected as the statistical sample of research by the random-stratum sampling method.

## Research tools

The tools used in this research are as follows:

Social anxiety scale (Conoor *et al.*, 2000): this scale of this questionnaire is a 17- article self-evaluation scale which has three sub-scales of fear (6 ar-

ticle), avoidance (7 articles) and physiological discomfort (4 articles). Each article or question is to be rated on the basis of the likert's five-rate scale (4-0). Reliability of this questionnaire by retesting method has been 78% to 89% in the groups with diagnosis of the social phobia (Abdi, 2007).

Self-efficacy scale for social situations (Gaudiano, & Herbert, 2003): It includes 9 items, subjects rate each items on the basis of a 10-rate scale (9-0). Validity and reliability of this scale in various researches has been reported to be ideal. In order to study the factors of the self-efficient was equal to 0.89 and Bartlett test was significant in the level of  $P < 0.0001$  (Astvra, 1991).

Test of body image (Fisher-1970): This test has been designed to evaluate the outlook of individual at the general features of body, including 46 articles. Validity of this test was studied by Yazdanjou in Iran in 2000. In order to determine validity, 99 level 1, level 2 and level 3 high school students were selected. Correlation coefficient of 0.81 was obtained.

## Results

The data obtained from execution of the research were analyzed by use of perceptive statistics

(Multiple regression, Pearson correlation coefficient and SPSS soft ware. After presentation of data and extraction of results, following tables have been obtained, respectively.

**Table 1. Matrix of correlation between the social anxiety and social self-efficacy with body image.**

	Body image	Social anxiety	Social self-efficacy
Body image	1	** - 0.587	** 0.488
Social anxiety	** - 0.587	1	** - 0.477
Social self-efficacy	** 0.488	** - 0.477	1

\*\* $P < 0.01$

As observed in the above table, quantity of correlation between social anxiety with body image ( $r = 0.587$ ) and quantity of correlation between social self-efficacy with body image ( $r = 0.488$ ) which is/ are significant statistically. ( $P < 0.01$ )

**Table 2. Test of analysis of variance for significance of the model in the last step.**

	Sum of square	Rate of freedom	Average of squares	F	Significance level
Regression	56070.56	2	32557.28	125.32	0.001
Remained	447.04	237	411.16		

With regard to table 2, the obtained F is significant in the level of 0.01. ( $P = 0.001$ ,  $F(2,237) = 125.32$ ). Therefore, we conclude with 0.99 of confidence that relationship between social anxiety and social self-efficacy with body image is significant and the predictor variables are able to predict the criterion variable (body image). Thus, we are allowed to analyze the regression. In order to determine the best predictor of body image out of the predictor variables, the regression model with the step by step method has been used.

Results of regression through the step by step method show that, at first, social self-efficacy as the most powerful predictor variable has entered into the model and has been able to explicate 35% of the

variance of criterion variable (body image). In the second step, social anxiety has been added to model and these two components (self-efficacy and social anxiety) have been able to clarify 40% of the variance of criterion variable (body image).

**Table 3. Multiple correlation between the predictor and criterion variables.**

Step	Multiple correlation coefficient (R)	Square of coefficient of multiple correlation (R <sup>2</sup> )	Square of the coefficient of corrected correlation
1	0.587	0.35	0.34
2	0.633	0.40	0.40

**Table 4. Standard and non-standard coefficients of the predictor and criterion variables.**

Coefficient	Non-standard coefficient		Standard coefficients		
	B	Standard estimation error	Beta	t	Significance level
Constant quantity	58.237	14.76		2.59	0.001
Social self-efficacy	1.839	0.229	0.459	8.02	0.001
Social anxiety	-0.842	0.18	-0.268	-4.69	0.001

On the basis of the above table's data, the social self-efficacy with ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $t = 8.02$ ,  $B = 0.459$ ) and the social anxiety with ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $t = -3.69$ ,  $B = -0.268$ ) in the final criterion variable (body image). Among these two variables, social self-efficacy with ( $Beta = 0.459$ ) has the maximum rate of share to predict the criterion variable (body image).

(Social anxiety)  $- 0.842$  (social self-efficacy)  $1.839 + 58.237 =$  body image.

In the next step, the study of effect of relationship of each one of the predictor variables (social anxiety, social self-efficacy) singly on the criterion variable was carried out and results were presented as following:

**Table 5. Correlation between the social anxiety and body image.**

Variable	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social anxiety	-0.587	0.001
Body image		

With regard to the table, it is observed that there exists a correlation between the social anxiety and body image ( $r = -0.587$ ) which is significant statistically. ( $P < 0.001$ ) Therefore, it can be concluded with 99% of assurance that there exists a negative significant relationship between the social anxiety and body image of the girl student. In other words, the body image of the girl students decreases through increase of social anxiety.

As it is observed in table 6, there exists a correlation between social self-efficacy and body image ( $r = 0.488$ ) which is significant statistically ( $P < 0.001$ ). Thus, it can be concluded with 99% of assurance that there exists a positive significant relationship between the social self-efficacy and body

image of girl students. In other words, body image of the girl students increases as well as through increase of the social self-efficacy.

**Table 6. Correlation between the social self-efficacy and body image.**

Variable	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social self-efficacy	0.488	0.001
Body image		

## Discussion and conclusions

Objective of current research is to determine the relationship of the social anxiety and social self-efficacy with body image of girl students of the Islamic Azad University, and the obtained results showed that quantity of correlation between the social anxiety and social self-efficacy with body image is significant statistically.

In other words, social anxiety and social self-efficacy have a significant role in the prediction of the criterion variable (body image). Among these two variables, the social self-efficacy with ( $Beta = 0.459$ ) has the maximum/ highest share to predict the criterion variable (body image). In the explication of the obtained results, it can be said that, probably, an image or conception which every human has about himself is an important and fateful problem in the situation of the presents time and future and in the adoption of his/her stances, and movement of the mankind is pledged to it. As one of the ideal consequences, self-efficacy is valuable in most of psychological and educational situations and is to be identified as a mediator variable which can facilitate to

acquire the ideal results. Doubt regarding the activities is inclination toward doubt regarding the quality of one self's performance; That is, the individuals who have higher score in this subscale don't see their own performance in the perfect limit constantly, and even though they act in the best manner, they will hesitate to begin any action again. Perhaps, these individuals are very doubter or skeptical, but we must not tell necessarily that they become anxious in the performance of acts, even incomplete acts. Of course, a large number of these hesitant individuals may get involved in the performance anxiety regarding the somatic (body) actions as well.

Therefore, it can be said that the students are of a low self-efficacy skill through the social anxiety and act slower in the solution of their own problems and complexities and get involved more in difficulty in their somatic/ body imagination. In a research, Taherifard dealt with determining the model for prediction of the social anxiety through study of some predictor variables of the social anxiety (Taherifard, 2009)

Results showed that model for prediction of social anxiety includes shyness/ self-consciousness, ambivalent and avoidable attachment style, behavioral inhibition in the adulthood and childhood periods, social self-efficacy, negative self evaluation and perception of negative evaluation by others, respectively. Morris showed that low level of self-efficacy has been accompanied by the high (up) level of anxiety attributes and signs of the anxiety disorders, including social anxiety disorder (Muris, 2002). Through studying the relationship between the social anxiety and body image of girl students, the current research showed that there exists a significant and negative relationship between the social anxiety and body image of girl students. In other words, body image of girl students decreases through increase of social anxiety. Considering that youth period is one of the most important and, at the same time, the most chaotic and complex steps of life which is to be formed by wish for lack of dependence, dissociation from thoughts and values of the parents in order to consolidate the personality organization of individual and, in this period, the youngsters get involved in a kind of ambivalence and social anxiety through being under pressure from view point of occupational and educational positions and many other tensions or, some time, individuals avoid or fear due to placement in the social situations, most of them (youngsters) would lie to be consideration among the classmates and

attendants in the student periods and, due to this same tendency, they check themselves constantly and this checking is more in their own physical appearance. The more they see difference among themselves and ideal image of themselves, the more they get involved in the anxiety. In a research on the individuals applying for the beauty surgery, Khanjani *et al.*, showed that these individuals dissatisfy with their body image. Also, anxiety disorder in the individuals applying for beauty surgery is higher than the individuals not applying for beauty surgery and the social anxiety disorder has the highest rank (Khanjani *et al.*, 2012). Results obtained from the research of Fredrick *et al.*, showed that the distorted body images can affect on the physical and psychological health of an individual, and continuous dissatisfaction with her own body image can lead to the depression, anxiety, social phobia, disorder in the sleep and psychological/ mental derangement, disruption in the feeding models and other disorders (Fredrick, 2007). Also, researches of Ivarsson and colleagues showed that difference of the individual's evaluations from herself with her own criteria regarding the somatic apparent status was low and score of individuals in the image of body with positive outlook compared to slimness, negative temperament, signs of stress and anxiety showed much more correlation (Ivarsson *et al.*, 2005).

Ferda and Gimez expressed that dissatisfaction with body image leads to the appearance of the social anxiety, and the more individuals become dissatisfied with body image, the more they experience the anxiety (Freda, & Gamze, 2004). Result of studying the relationship of social self-efficacy and body image of the girl students in the current research has suggested the existence of a positive significant relationship. In other words, body image of girls students increases through increase of social self-efficacy too self-efficacy influences on the thinking model and reactions of individuals. Self-efficacy felling can affect on the motivation of human strongly. Thus, it can determine the motivational level of students through controlling the rate of effort and time span of insistence upon the body image. Low-self-efficacy can destroy the motivations, reduces the wishes and interferes with cognitive capabilities and leaves undesirable effect on the physical health.

Therefore, it can be expected that the self-efficacy may have been related to the sense of positive image from one self. Totally, results of research showed that the self-efficacy has the maximum



share in the prediction of body image because it can be said that low self-efficacy beliefs regarding oneself is, probably, a factor which has been able to influence on the skills of regarding the image from body in the students. On one hand, existence of relationship between these two variables can be due to the higher self-efficacy level in the students as well.

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